

Despite today's polarized environment in Washington DC, there are several areas where federal attention and investment makes sense and should have bipartisan support. Cleaning up America's contaminated Superfund sites is a perfect example where this kind of cooperation is needed. The last thing that local businesses and taxpayers can afford is the prevailing attitude of "sue, study and stall" which has unfortunately defined the last decade of the Superfund program.

Successful cleanup of highly polluted areas not only restores the environment and protects public health, it also creates jobs for large and small businesses, bolstering the local economy and attracting new development to formerly blighted areas. This is certainly the case for the Portland Harbor, a 10-mile stretch of the Willamette River listed as a Superfund site in 2000. The river is contaminated with PCBs and other heavy metals associated with multiple sources from more than 100 years of activities and more than 100 potentially responsible parties. As Oregon's largest seaport with 40,000 jobs in the surrounding area, the Portland Harbor is crucial to our local economy and its cleanup is a priority for Oregon's entire delegation in Congress.

In recent years I have grown increasingly concerned by the lack of progress on the Harbor cleanup alongside the growing costs associated with studying the problem. I have convened several meetings with business, government, tribal and environmental leaders to push the cleanup process and timeline in addition to focusing on how Congress can help, including renewal of the Superfund tax. Last month, my colleagues, Senators **Ron Wyden** and **Jeff Merkley**

and Congressman

Kurt Schrader

, joined me for a stakeholder session and boat tour of key sites.

One of the key issues considered at this meeting was ensuring that the federal government engages in partnership with local stakeholders to move the cleanup forward.

The federal government has long played a significant role in Portland Harbor. The Defense Department had a dominant presence during the Second World War as ships were built and repaired during wartime and later scrapped. Today, the U.S. government's presence includes management of the federal navigation channel by the Army Corps of Engineers and holdings by the Army Corps, Navy, and Coast Guard. The Defense Department should be an active participant in cleanup negotiations and contribute resources to help get the job done.

One of my top legislative priorities in Congress is [H.R. 1596](#) , my bill to renew the Superfund tax. This legislation reinstates taxes on the petrochemical industry that were allowed to expire in 1995. Prior to expiration, the tax raised an average of \$1.7 billion annually to fund the cleanup of hazardous waste sites around the country, particularly areas where there is an “orphan share” and liability cannot be assigned because the responsible party no longer exists. It would ensure that polluters — not taxpayers — pay for cleanup. Because Portland Harbor is likely to have a significant “orphan share,” passage of this legislation is vital to the project’s success.

The Portland Harbor Superfund cleanup will lead to a safer, cleaner and better-functioning harbor that provides opportunities for the public and supports a thriving industrial economy. We cannot risk further delays or an inefficient cleanup effort. Now marks the time for all parties to unite to clean up the Willamette River and other Superfund sites across the country. The federal government has a significant role to play in helping families who live, work and play in these areas, and I will continue to fight for their cause in Congress.

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